

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00  
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 MCT-01 /077 W  
-----122730 241834Z /43

O R 241723Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2161  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
USMISSION USUN NY  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USIA WASHDC

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E. O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PINT IS US  
SUBJ: ALLEGED STATEMENT BY AMERICAN DIPLOMAT THAT BEGIN SHOULD  
BE REPLACED AS PM

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 4038, (B) TEL AVIV 4033

1. SUMMARY: ISRAEL RADIO REPORTED LATE MARCH 23  
THAT A "HIGH AMERICAN PERSONALITY" HAD TOLD A "HIGH  
ISRAELI PERSONALITY" THAT FOR THE SAKE OF THE PEACE  
NEGOTIATIONS, BEGIN WOULD HAVE TO BE REPLACED AS PM,  
AND A NEW POLITICAL ALIGNMENT WOULD HAVE TO  
TAKE FORM IN ISRAEL. ISRAEL PRESS PICKED UP STORY ON  
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MARCH 24 AND AL HAMISHMAR ADDED TWIST THAT "HIGH  
AMERICAN PERSONALITY" WAS CHARGE VIETS. NEEDLESS TO  
SAY, ALLEGED STATEMENTS NOT MADE BY VIETS OR ANY MEMBER  
OF EMBASSY STAFF. PAO HAS CALLED AUTHOR OF AL HAMISHMAR  
STORY AND INFORMED HER THAT IMPLICATION THAT CHARGE  
WAS SOURCE OF STORY WAS INCORRECT, THAT HE HAD NOT  
SEEN ANY LABOR KNESSET MEMBER IN LAST THREE DAYS

AND THAT NO OTHER EMBOFF HAD MADE SUCH A STATEMENT. SIMILAR RESPONSE GIVEN TO REUTERS. STORY IS CLEARLY A PLANT. HOWEVER, ASIDE FROM HARDLINERS IN LIKUD INTENT UPON MAINTAINING BEGIN'S POLICIES INTACT AND THE GOVERNMENT UNITED BEHIND HIM, WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC IDEAS AT WHOM TO POINT FINGER AT AS SOURCE OF ALLEGATION. END SUMMARY

2. AS REPORTED IN REFTELS, ISRAEL RADIO REPORTED LATE MARCH 23 THAT A "HIGH AMERICAN PERSONALITY" HAD TOLD A "HIGH ISRAELI PERSONALITY" THAT FOR THE SAKE OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN WOULD HAVE TO BE REPLACED AS PRIME MINISTER AND A NEW POLITICAL ALIGNMENT WOULD HAVE TO TAKE FORM IN ISRAEL. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, THE AMERICAN STATED THAT THE LIKUD WAS NOT SOLID AND AS PROOF OF THIS GAVE THE DIVISION BETWEEN HERUT AND THE LIBERALS OVER A CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PRESENT REGIME WERE SAID TO EXIST IN THE LIKUD (I.E., THE LIBERALS) IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DMC OR OTHER FORCES (I.E., THE ALIGNMENT).

3. THE ISRAELI PRESS PICKED UP THIS REPORT ON FRIDAY MORNING BUT GAVE IT A NEW TWIST. AL HAMISHMAR SUGGESTED THAT THE "HIGH AMERICAN PERSONALITY" WAS AN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT IN ISRAEL WHO MADE THE STATEMENT TO A LABOR MK THREE DAYS AGO. POINTEDLY, THE ARTICLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOTED THAT THE SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIAL IN ISRAEL TODAY (AND PRESUMABLY THE SOURCE OF THE STATEMENT) WAS NONE OTHER THAN MYSELF. YEDIOT (ZIMUKI) ALSO CLAIMED THAT AN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT HAD MADE SUCH A STATEMENT TO A FORMER SENIOR LABOR MINISTER LAST FRIDAY. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THESE STORIES ARE A TOTAL FABRICATION. NEITHER I NOR ANY MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY STAFF MADE ANY SUCH STATEMENT. PAO CALLED AUTHOR OF AL HAMISHMAR STORY AND INFORMED HER THAT IMPLICATION THAT CHARGE WAS SOURCE OF STORY WAS INCORRECT, THAT HE HAD NOT SEEN ANY LABOR KNESSET MEMBER IN LAST THREE DAYS, AND THAT NO OTHER EMBOFF HAD MADE SUCH A STATEMENT. SIMILAR RESPONSE GIVEN TO REUTERS.

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4. REACTION TO THE ALLEGATION HAS BEEN HEAVY AND  
NEGATIVE. ISRAEL RADIO REPORTED THAT SOURCES IN  
JERUSALEM HAD EXPRESSED WONDER AND ANGER AT THE REMARKS  
MADE BY THE AMERICAN PERSONALITY. YEDIOT STATED THAT  
ONE TOP LABOR PARTY LEADER TERMED THE REMARKS A CRUDE  
AND GROSS INTERVENTION INTO ISRAELI DOMESTIC AFFAIRS  
SMACKING OF CIA INVOLVEMENT IN THE OVERTHROW OF VARIOUS  
GOVERNMENTS. FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE, MAARIV, IN A RARE  
FRIDAY FRONT-PAGE  
EDITORIAL, CRITICIZED THE ISRAELI MEDIA FOR "A  
POLITICALLY OUTRAGEOUS ACT OF JOURNALISTIC DECEPTION",  
ARGUING THAT IT WAS PRESENTING AS NEWS A STORY BASED  
ENTIRELY ON ALLEGED STATEMENTS BY ANONYMOUS PERSONALI-  
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TIES.

5. ISRAELI POLITICIANS HAVE ALSO BEEN QUICK TO CRITICIZE  
ALLEGED US INTERVENTION IN INTERNAL ISRAELI POLITICS,  
BEGIN, UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL, ANSWERED (IN HEBREW)  
REPORTER'S QUESTION AS FOLLOWS: "I DO NOT KNOW WHO THE  
DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE IS. BUT IT IS THE PEOPLE OF

ISRAEL WHO ELECT THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL AND NOT A US REPRESENTATIVE." IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION IN ENGLISH, BEGIN STATED THAT "THE PM OF ISRAEL IS ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND NOT BY ANY DIPLO-MATIC REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION." IN SIMILAR FASHION, PERES TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE PM IS ELECTED BY THE KNESSET AND ONLY THE KNESSET. IN ANY CASE, HE STRESSED THAT HE WASNT THE "HIGH ISRAELI PERSONALITY". ALLON TOLD ISRAEL RADIO THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE NO RIGHT TO GIVE ADVICE ON WHO SHOULD BE PM. SHARIR, THE LEADER OF THE LIKUD KNESSET FACTION (AND A LIBERAL), SAID THE LIKUD REJECTS WITH DISGUST ANY ATTEMPT TO INTERVENE IN ISRAEL'S DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND THE LIKUD STANDS BEHIND THE PM'S PEACE PLAN. BEN-MEIR, THE HEAD OF THE NRP KNESSET FACTION, SAID THE AMERICANS ARE TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT BUT THE NRP STANDS SOLIDLY BEHIND IT. THESE STATEMENTS ARE A FAIR REFLECTION OF ISRAELI POLITICAL COMMENT ON THIS ISSUE.

6. COMMENT: THERE ARE FEW BETTER WAYS TO RALLY SUPPORT HERE THAN AN ACCUSATION OF BLATANT US INTERVENTION IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. FOLLOWING REPORTS OF BEGIN'S DIFFICULT TALKS IN WASHINGTON AND PRIOR TO THE GOI'S FACING HARD DECISIONS ON NEXT STEPS IN THE PEACE PROCESS, THIS ALLEGED STATEMENT BY A US OFFICIAL IS TOO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIMELY AND CONVENIENT. I CANT HELP FEELING THAT THE REPORT IS A PLANT. HOWEVER, OTHER THAN HARDLINERS IN THE LIKUD INTENT UPON MAINTAINING BEGIN'S POLICIES INTACT AND THE GOVERNMENT UNITED BEHIND HIM, I DONT KNOW AT WHOM TO POINT THE SMOKING GUN I FOUND IN MY HAND WHEN I WOKE UP THIS MORNING. VIETS

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## Message Attributes

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